

B PENT 22 10-21-2018  
Psalm 119:105-112 II Timothy 3:14-17 Luke 24:13-49  
Open Minds and Burning Hearts

It was late; about 2 in the morning! I had been sitting in my dorm room, in an overstuffed chair that had belonged to my grandfather and in which I had sat on my grandmother's lap many times as she read to me or told me stories. I was living on Daisy Hill, the huge dormitory complex at the University of Kansas. My room was on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of McCollum Hall. I had been studying and still should have been, but instead I was reading the Bible; Paul's letters to Timothy to be exact. I had finished the first letter and was just beginning the second chapter of the second letter, when I read these words,

"<sup>2</sup>The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

In an instant, my life was forever changed. As my eyes passed over those words, there was no denying that through that seemingly innocuous sentence written nearly 2,000 years before to a young Christian pastor God was speaking directly to me. Everything I have done since that night almost 45 years ago to the day has been influenced by those words. I should have preface my statements about that night by saying it was anything but a mountaintop spiritual experience. It was more akin to Jesus telling Peter three times to feed Christ's sheep, paralleling Peter's three denials the night before Jesus was crucified. Becoming a minister was not something that I aspired to, or even something I understood. It was not what I had spent almost 4 years of my life training to do. It would be 3 months before I told another living soul and 4 months before I told my pastor or my family. I didn't feel inadequate; I knew I was inadequate! But as my pastor told me when I sat with him and told him about my experience, one that closely resembled his own call to ministry, "Lane, where do you go to hide when the Spirit of God is all around you!"

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 2 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." I know that to be true! A little further into that second chapter of Second Timothy we read, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."

The Bible is not something to be trifled with! Too many people who claim to revere the Bible use it in a manner that is dangerous and dishonors the Bible and God. First off, don't claim more for the Bible than the book claims for itself. In and of itself, the Bible is not infallible. That claim is as idolatrous when applied to a book, even a heavenly inspired one, as it is when applied to a human being, even if that human being is the head of the world's largest church. ONLY God is infallible. But God has chosen to use the finite and imperfect to accomplish his infinite and perfect will. That is as true of the various authors God inspired to write and compile the Bible, as it is of the book itself.

The Bible is a divine instrument that God uses to mold us into the image of the perfect Word of God, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The Bible has its limitations when

people try to use it as a history or science book. But when it comes to matters of faith and practice, it is sufficient to lead a desiring soul to God. As Paul tells Timothy, “<sup>14</sup> You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” That is the Bible’s chief purpose, to lead us to Jesus.

But a second and almost as important task is how the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to transform us into the character of Jesus. It is God’s purpose, not just to save us, but to save us to the uttermost, as John Wesley was fond of saying. Jesus didn’t die just to save us from hell; but he died to fit us for heaven. As Paul continues to instruct Timothy and us, he says in the very next verses, 16 and 17, “<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Profitable for teaching! The work translated here as teaching or doctrine is a noun derived from the Greek verb meaning to teach. That Greek verb literally means to cause someone to learn. The Greek noun for teaching carries the idea of properly applied-teaching or instruction.

Profitable for reproof! Again, a noun formed from a Greek verb that means to expose, rebuke, discipline or convict. In other words, the Bible is useful for God to convince us of what we are doing wrong.

Profitable for correction! The Greek noun we translate as correction comes from synthesis of two words, the prefix *epi*, which means on, or fitting, which intensifies the second word, a verb that means to make straight. So it means to restore something to its proper condition, to straighten out, hence, correction. So, the Holy Spirit using the Bible can straighten us out once we have been convinced of what we are doing wrong.

Profitable for training in righteousness! The word translated “training” is a Greek noun most often used to refer to the teaching or disciplining of children. The word translated “righteousness” is referring to a divine justice or justness, that which is deemed right by the Lord.

And why is God concerned that we be taught, convicted, corrected and trained in what is deemed right by the Lord? So that we may be *ar’-tee-os*, that is complete, fitted, ready, equipped. And just to make sure he gets the point across, Paul takes this word *ar’-tee-os* and adds the prefix *ek* to it, which intensifies the meaning of complete, fitted, ready, and equipped. To quote Strong’s Greek Concordance, “It stresses the end-impact of Scripture on the receptive believer. Indeed the Bible thoroughly fits (“furnishes”) each believer to live in full communion with God.”

But the key word here is receptive! You can learn all the original languages, pour over all the best commentaries, and read the Bible from dawn-to-dusk, day-in-and-day-out, but if you do not allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read and you do not respond to what the Spirit is telling you, then you might as well be reading the phone book. The Greek word that we translate as “inspired” literally means “God-breathed.” It is not sufficient that God inspired the writer, we the reader must be open to the Holy

Spirit's inspired interpretation for our life. It is only then that God can ignite our hearts to burn within us, when we open up our minds to God's instruction.

Dr. Elaine Heath shares a way to help us remember how to approach the Bible that a professor taught her. You first want to search the Scriptures with a telescope, looking far back into the past to find the contextual and cultural setting. Second, you need to search the Scriptures with a periscope, looking to see what the author placed before and after the verse or passage we are reading to gain insight into the purpose and meaning the author intended. Third, we need to explore the Bible using a microscope, drilling down deep to understand the meaning of the words used; and fourth and finally we need to use a stethoscope to see if we have allowed the Scripture to permeate our hearts. Bible study is, or should be, a form of prayer; an intimate time of allowing God to speak directly to us through the Scriptures. God didn't give us the Bible so that we could beat other people up with it. God gave us the Bible so the Holy Spirit could use it to transform our lives. But if our minds are not open to the Holy Spirit as we read, our hearts will never catch fire. In Jesus' name, Amen.